

## **Comments from Two MCC US Women's Concerns Advisory Committee Members**

### *1. Moniqua Acosta*

My relationship with MCC US Women's Concerns started in May 2001, with the domestic violence conference for the Latino Churches, when I was so moved by the wonderful progressive work Women's Concerns was facilitating for my people.

I later found myself working for Women's Concerns for almost a year, filling in as staff associate while the director was on sabbatical. I was blessed and nourished spiritually and mentally by the time I spent at the desk. I was able to connect with many women on a number of levels – from the Network of Survivors of Abuse to our Canadian counterparts.

The fruits of my time with Women's Concerns are evident in my home congregation and in my personal life. I am able to share with my home church, especially the women. At times it is challenging to work with those who accept all they are told and never question a thing. But I am sure it is equally challenging to them to have a young woman like me asking too many questions and stirring up their comfort zones. We are all growing together.

In my home life I catch myself changing the words of the children's books I read to my daughters in order to make the depiction of women not so meek.

I am very excited and determined to see the work of Women's Concerns become a reality for more women everywhere. As our mission statement says, we “work for the dignity and development of women, and [seek] to encourage mutuality and empowerment in our relationships with other women and with men.”

This is important work, educating my church and myself.

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*Moniqua Acosta is a bilingual caseworker with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lancaster County in Lancaster, PA.*

*2. Maribel Ramirez Hinojosa*

It is an honor to be in the midst of such matriarchs. And I feel honored to be part of MCC, specifically with Women's Concerns. My involvement with MCC US Women's Concerns began while I was in graduate school and was asked to write an article for the newsletter, *Women's Concerns Report*. I later served as a compiler for a bilingual issue on domestic violence, and now am an advisory board member for the Women's Concerns Desk. I have seen the growth it has had in the short time I have been involved with the committee. Particularly, Latinos and Latinas in our Spanish-speaking congregations have come to learn more about Women's Concerns, mostly through the bilingual periodicals and through the domestic violence workshop held in Pennsylvania, which sparked several local workshops throughout the United States, including California, Texas, and Florida.

What future do I see for Women's Concerns? I see it as a platform for women to continue to share their voices, women from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. I see it as being more inclusive of the wider constituency in order to give everyone an equal opportunity to share their story. For it is through this process of sharing our stories that we will learn from each other, and draw closer to each other and to God. I also envision Women's Concerns continuing to strengthen the resources it currently offers and creatively exploring other areas of growth. I particularly visualize an anti-sexism training that can be offered to the broader constituency, in which women can begin to experience true freedom in our Creator, a workshop in which God's justice can prevail and hope and equality can be spread.

I commend Women's Concerns for assertively addressing issues specifically related to women. To all those who have come before me, I say, Thank you, and to all those who are yet to come, I say, Take on the challenge, there is much work to be done.

I would like to end by reading a portion of Victor Villasenor's *Thirteen Senses: A Memoir*. He is writing about his family. This book contains strong

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*Maribel Ramirez Hinojosa, a psychotherapist working towards a PhD in Clinical Psychology, lives in Edinburg, TX.*

women's voices and illustrates the power of women sharing their stories with each other and the impact those stories make on women's lives. I think that no matter what point we are at in our lives, we all have something to share as women of God.

Work, *mi hijita*, is a woman's power. Her relaxation and sanity. Her way of coming to terms with life's twists and turns, and not lose her way. After all, remember that it is written in that stars that men came from the rock, the wind, and the fire! And we women came from the flower, the tree, the soil, the water, and hence, any healthy woman can consume a man's fire as easy as water can consume any little flame.

Why do you think men are so weak and chase the wind? Because down deep they know that the time of their molten fire is short-lived. Whereas women are strong, knowing deep inside of themselves that all life comes from them, and they are the eternal soil for planting and the rain comes from the Heavens and replenishes the rivers and lakes and even the very sea.

So always know, *mi hijita*, [and I would add, all of you women who are present] that you are *una lluvia de oro*, a rain of gold, sent by God to do your work for the survival of all humankind. We are the power, we women are *el eje*, the center, the hub *de nuestras familias*, and in this knowledge, then our hearts are INDESTRUCTIBLE!

– Victor Villasenor, *Thirteen Senses: A Memoir*  
(Harper Collins, 2001), 142.

Thank you and may God bless you.